

# SCREWWORMS AGAIN!

Screwworms are still a threat in the Southwest. Nearly 10,000 cases were confirmed in 1968 — the worst outbreak in 6 years. Seven billion sterile flies were released to halt the pest's reproduction. While this proved helpful, the eradication program had two strikes against it: weather and livestock management.

Eradication officials had to work against unusually wet weather, which favored the insect's survival, and some producers failed to follow good livestock management practices. The results were predictable; screwworms moved back into the Southwest. Now they must be controlled.

The prospects for 1969 are poor. Sterile fly production is limited. Midwinter cases have occurred in Texas. Mexico has had many infestations, and the weather has favored screwworms in their overwintering areas.

But there is hope. It rests largely with you, the ranchers and farmers of the Southwest. Through the management of your animals, you can do your part to end the screwworm threat.

## Know the Screwworm Danger

Some screwworms may persist despite sterile fly treatments, especially if prevention is weak and the weather is mild and wet. A single screwworm fly can travel 180 miles to infest your livestock with its deadly offspring.

Greatest danger from screwworms usually comes in the fall, but it pays to watch for them throughout the warm seasons. Double your vigilance whenever screwworms are reported in or near your part of the state.

Ranchers in southern Texas should be on guard year around. In the spring, screwworms may spread into Central Texas, the Edwards Plateau and across the Pecos. If unchecked, by mid-October they may reach deep into New Mexico, the Panhandle, Oklahoma, Arkansas and Louisiana. Movement of infested animals can carry screwworms much farther. Don't assume that your herds are safe!

## Inspect Your Animals Regularly

Prevention begins with regular inspection. Look over your animals for cuts, wounds, bites or any skin break that will provide screwworm entry. Screwworms most often infest the navels of new-born animals. Man-made wounds from branding, castrating, dehorning, docking, ear-clipping and other operations are open invitations. Even wire cuts attract screwworms. Immediate treatment can help curb additional screwworm cases.

An infested wound exudes a foul-smelling fluid. Screwworms will be deep in the wound and may be associated with other parasites. The worms, which are the larvae of the screwworm fly, mature in just 5 days; so inspect your herds often.

## Collect Suspected Screwworms for Identification

Collect larvae or egg masses found in or near wounds. Remove larvae from deep in the center. Look for white egg masses on the edge of the wound.

Place your samples in water or alcohol, and send them with your name and address to: Screwworm Eradication Program, P. O. Box 969, Mission, Texas 78572.

Your county agricultural agent has mailing kits for you to use. Check with him on where they may be obtained. Keep the kits handy in your glove compartment or saddlebag.

Report all screwworm findings. Your larvae samples are the only real information available on the spread and intensity of screwworm outbreaks. Only professionally trained experts can positively detect screwworms from other blowfly maggots.

## Treat Wounds and Infestations

Untreated wounds invite infestations, and untreated infestations can mean stunted, maimed and dead animals. Even worse, every untreated infestation adds another link to the chain of screwworm reproduction and spread.

Prevent screwworms by spraying or dipping herds in coumaphos (CO-RAL) preparations labeled for this purpose. Treat wounds, infested or not, with coumaphos dust, Smear 62, EQ-335 ronnel (Korlan) or other approved preparations. Apply the pesticide to the wound and the surrounding 3 inches of skin. Do this twice the first week, and once a week thereafter until the wound is healed.

*Follow directions carefully* and avoid getting pesticides or smears on your skin. Ronnel and coumaphos are systemic insecticides. Take care not to treat animals both internally and externally at the same time or with two or more such insecticides at the same time. Ask your veterinarian or county agent for additional information.

## Keep Livestock Free of Injuries

Protruding nails, barbed wire, obstacles or crowded conditions increase the chance of livestock injury, which opens the door for screwworms. Protect your animals by removing any conditions that cause unnecessary cuts or scratches.

Livestock management requires many surgical operations, but proper timing can sharply reduce the chance of infestation. Winter and early spring are the safest seasons. Fall is the season of greatest screwworm danger. Be on guard especially if you hear reports of screwworms within 200 miles of your farm or ranch.

Regardless of the season, treat every cut with coumaphos or smears. The same applies to navels of new-born animals, which have the least chance of infestation if they are born in the spring.

#### **Don't Ship Infested Animals**

When you buy or sell livestock, don't give screwworms a free ride. See that the animals are free of infestations, and

observe all restrictions on shipments. Spraying or dipping at the point of origin offers protection against undetected screwworms or in-transit infestation. When you receive stock, inspect for cuts or infestations and give them any required treatment.

#### **Support the Eradication Program** (*Practice Good Livestock Management*)

Give your personal, active support to the Screwworm Eradication Program. Follow preventive measures. Inspect your herds; collect and report suspected screwworms; and treat all cuts and infestations. Encourage your neighbors to do the same. *Your full cooperation can hold back the spread of screwworms.*

*Information in this leaflet was adapted from material developed by the Agricultural Research Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture.*